

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

4-237

Orleans

EAS.1259

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): North Eastham

Photograph



Address: 45 Bob-White Lane

Historic Name: Blanche and William B. Steele, Sr.
House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: ca. 1919

Source: Deed research, 1920 Eastham Valuation List

Style/Form: No Style

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete block

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Two-story garage/outbuilding, built 2022 (Photo 2)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Extension of north porch enclosure (1988), new windows

Condition: Good

Moved: no ☐ yes ☒ **Date:** [1952-1966]

Acreage: 0.48 acres

Setting: This parcel is located within a subdivision on the west side of Bob-White Lane. The surrounding area includes houses built in the mid- to late-20th century. A cobblestone and gravel parking area extends south of the house, and an asphalt driveway leads to a detached garage. The property is landscaped with lawn around the house, planting beds and mature trees.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Blanche and William B. Steele, Sr. House, built in ca. 1919, is an astylistic one-story cottage with an unusual form. The house consists of a broad rectangular main block with a higher, cross-gable block that forms a T. All roofs have a high hipped form. The building rests on a concrete block foundation. The elevations are clad in wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles with projecting eaves. The front elevation has an off-centered front entrance set in a plain surround. Fenestration consists primarily of modern, thermal 2/1 windows. The windows and the front door abut the roof entablature. The windows at the right (north) end of the main block are grouped, likely indicating a porch.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay in Orleans and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

There are no houses in this location of the 1910 Barnstable County Atlas (Figure 2). All of the houses in this 18-lot subdivision were built between the 1950s and 1990s with the exception of this house, which has an Assessor date of 1919. According to title research, this 11-acre subdivision was created in 1966 out of land bought in 1952 by Joseph A. and Margaret M. Caurant then of Queens, NY.¹ That 1952 deed referenced one dwelling which may refer to this house. The subdivision was called Aspinet Meadows (Figure 3).

The 11-acre parcel with house had been owned by Rose and William B. Steele, Jr. of Reeds Ferry, NH. William Steele's father, William B. Steele, Sr., had sold him this land in 1946. That deed refers to one acre of asparagus land and 10 acres of pasture land.² Steele, Sr. had purchased this land in 1903 from the heirs of farmer George H. Dill of Eastham.³

If the ca.1919 construction date is accurate, then it would have been built by William B. Steele, Sr. He is listed in Durham's 1929 Eastham Directory living on Aspinette Road with his wife, Blanche, and he was listed as a farmer. What may be this house is shown set close to Aspinet Road in a 1938 United States Geological Survey (USGS) aerial photo, which also appears to show a number of farm outbuildings (Photo 3). According to the 1920 Eastham Valuation List, William Steele owned land that included a House (\$700), Cottage (\$350), Barn and Shed (\$200), Poultry House (\$25), and Shop (\$125), along with one cow and 32 fowl.

¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 830/ Page 76.

² Book 656/ Page 88.

³ Book 825/ Page 502.

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In addition to farming, William Bradford Steele, Sr. (1855-1951) worked part-time in Eastham as a barber for 50 years after retiring from a barber shop he owned in Orleans due to ill health. William Steele, Sr. was also active in real estate in Eastham, and involved his son. William Bradley Steele, Jr. (1899-1977) was listed as a shell fisherman in the 1930 census, and was divorced, living with his parents, and working as a laborer in the 1940 census. He married Anna Josephine Wells in 1942 (second marriage for both).

As noted above, William B. Steele, Jr. was living in New Hampshire when he sold this 11-acre parcel with dwelling to Joseph A. and Margaret M. Caurant in 1952. It was likely the Caurants who moved this house to its current location sometime before the subdivision plan was recorded in 1966. The house is shown in its current location on that subdivision plan.

Joseph Antoine Caurant was born in 1913 in Brittany, France. He emigrated to the US in 1929, and married his New York-born wife Maragaret in 1935. In the 1940 census, he was listed as a cook for the Hotel Ambassador on Park Avenue, and she was listed as a hotel waitress (likely the same hotel). By the time of the 1950 census, she was no longer working, and he was simply listed as a chef for a restaurant. They moved to Eastham after buying this land. It is unclear if they lived in this house or rented it out. When they sold this house, now on Lot 8 of the 1966 subdivision, they were living on Aspinet Road, not Bob-White Lane. They sold this house in 1978 to Allan and Sylvia Kampe of Worcester.⁴ Two years later, the Kampes were still living in Worcester when they sold it to Forrest J. and Mary J. Woodman of West Cornwall, CT.⁵ They owned the house for 30 years and were still living in West Cornwall in 2010 when they sold it to Michael J. Sullivan and Kenneth Kneeland, Jr. of Cambridge, MA.⁶ Kenneth Kneeland, now living in NY, NY continues to own this property.

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⁴ Book 2685/ Page 255.

⁵ Book 3114/ Page 113.

⁶ Book 24668/ Page 239.

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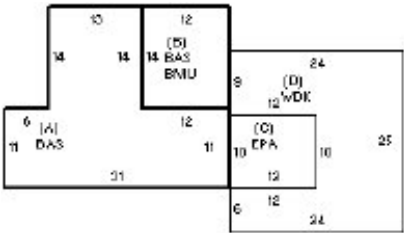


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View from Bob-White Lane, looking west.



Photo 3. 1938 USGS aerial survey photograph; arrow added to 45 Bob-White Lane in original location with outbuildings visible behind the house.

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Figure 2. Detail of 1910 Barnstable County Atlas (arrow added).

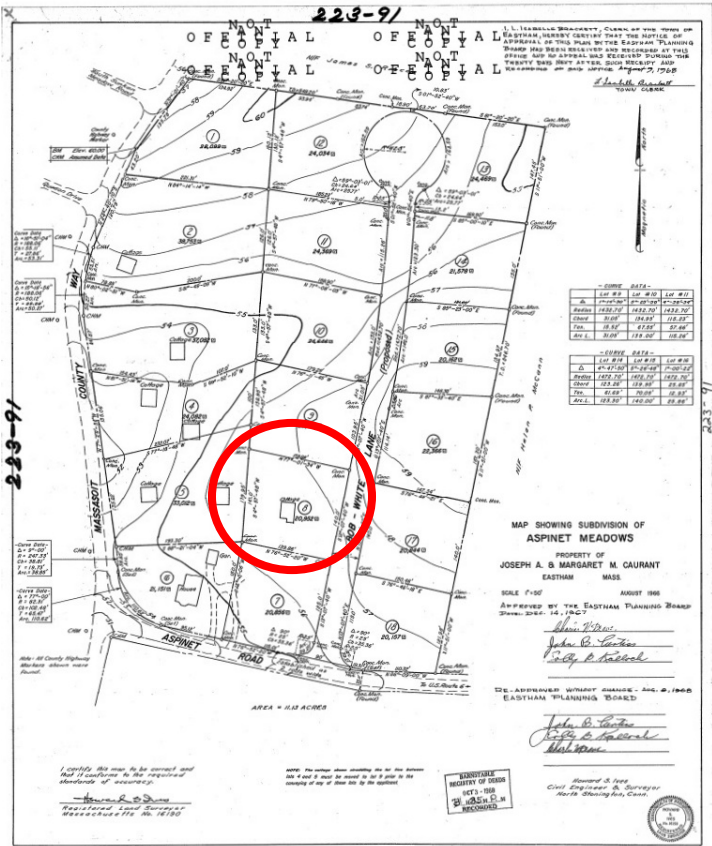


Figure 3. 1966 Subdivision of Aspinet Meadows (circle of Lot 8 added).